



American Association of School Librarians
a division of the American Library Association

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Kwame Brown
Chairman
District of Columbia Council
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 506
Washington, DC 20004

May 2, 2012

Dear Chairman Brown:

Recently I've read that the District of Columbia Public Schools is considering changes in how they fund school librarians and libraries. As funds become scarce during economic downturns, I understand that difficult decisions must be made when balancing budgets. However, I hope you recognize the importance school libraries play in graduating students who are skilled in the multiple literacies needed in the 21st century.

Multiple studies have affirmed there is a clear link between school library programs that are staffed by a full-time school librarian and student academic achievement. Across the United States, research has shown that students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized test scores than their peers in schools without libraries.

Students need the guidance of a reading expert to encourage them to read more and to love reading. To be proficient and competent citizens, students need to master research techniques, skillful use of the Internet, ethical use of information, cyber-safety, and other skills that are indicative of a strong school library program taught by a certificated school librarian. Certificated school librarians are trained to select excellent resources to encourage student reading and support the curriculum, to give instruction in 21st century skills, and to co-teach with every teacher, every teaching style, and every learning style.

As we look at schools implementing the Common Core Standards, there are strong connections between the new standards and what the school librarian teaches in the school library. The school library program provides real-world connections to help prepare our students for the world they will soon be facing. These critical skills in finding, evaluating, using, and sharing information in an ethical and authentic way are opportunities our students need to prepare them for college, career, and life. School librarians are the experts in delivering this instruction.

It is important that every child have equal access to school librarians and the resources in the school library. When you purchase materials for the school library, any student or teacher in the building can access it. When you purchase it for just one class, you limit that access to a teacher and a few students. School libraries are the great equalizer and a very economical way to provide resources to the entire school community.

As a decision maker, I am hoping you find the means to make a difference for the future of all your students, future wage earners, and future informed citizens by retaining a certificated school librarian. Please let me know if I can provide you with more information to assist you.

Thank you,

Carl A. Harvey II
2011-2012 President

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